Emergency Preparedness and Response Directorate
Department of Homeland Security

Emergency Management and Response-Information Sharing and Analysis Center

INFOGRAM
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CIP-Enhancing Experiment

Most emergency responders are aware of or have experienced incidents that required an immediate response to violent and dangerous situations such as natural disasters, explosions, sniper attacks, hazardous material accidents, etc. Occasionally, fire and emergency medical personnel were held back until law enforcers secured the scene. These delays were meant to ensure the safety and success of all first responders, but they potentially jeopardized community critical infrastructures as well as injured citizens.

The EMR-ISAC recently learned that one or more jurisdictions have begun experimenting with an "Emergency Services Response Team" (ESRT) for their specific community to reduce or eliminate the risk during these delays. The experiment involves providing relevant and detailed cross-training to volunteers of the law enforcement, fire, and emergency medical disciplines. Although not intended to substitute for a Special Weapons and Tactics Team (SWAT), ESRT members train closely together to develop skill sets to help victims and protect infrastructures, particularly during the early critical minutes of violent and dangerous circumstances.

The EMR-ISAC speculates that ESRTs can economically enhance critical infrastructure protection (CIP) and save lives in those municipalities where resources are extremely limited. The ESRT experiment uses existing resources to create a new resource (an Emergency Services Response Team) that will promote interoperability—through interdisciplinary teamwork—and fortify the protection of critical infrastructures, first responders, and community residents.

Hydrogen Cyanide Threat

Historically, firefighters and emergency medical responders have been concerned with carbon monoxide poisoning and hypoxia in smoke-inhalation. However, hydrogen cyanide poisoning is also a common byproduct of combustion. Additionally, hydrogen cyanide is a potential agent of chemical terrorism. For these reasons, it is a significant threat to both first responders and victims.

Terrorists can expose the public to this poisoning in deliberate structure fires, cyanide gas release within an enclosed space, and cyanide salts in food, water, or pharmaceuticals. Therefore, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) remind emergency responders to consider the following basic realities when preparing for disasters involving cyanide poisoning:

• It incapacitates victims within seconds to minutes.
• It causes death within minutes by disabling the blood's mechanism for carrying oxygen.
• Rapid recognition is necessary to reduce the risk of death.
• It can be effectively treated if diagnosed soon enough.

COOP and COG for the Emergency Services

Generally, continuity of operations (COOP) and continuity of government (COG) have very similar definitions. COOP pertains to an organization's ability to continue its operations without interruption by man-made or natural causes. COG refers to the government's ability to continue operations in an all-hazards environment. For the Emergency Services Sector (ESS) of the nation, COOP and COG share the same goal of supporting first responder capabilities to perform essential life and property saving services in addition to critical infrastructure protection.

Several sources confirm that COOP and COG plans should be coordinated to include all of the procedures that assure emergency response agencies and the local government will continue indispensable functions during and after any disaster. Organizational effectiveness specialists recommend that the senior leaders of emergency departments and local government officials collaborate to identify and prioritize vital functions, and develop plans to guarantee the continuity of each function.

The EMR-ISAC offers the following objectives of COOP and COG plans for the benefit of America's Emergency Services:

- Ensure the continuous performance of services during and after an emergency.
- Reduce any disruptions to emergency operations.
- Protect critical infrastructures and key assets.
- Minimize or eliminate the loss of life and property.
- Achieve a timely and orderly recovery from a disaster.
- Resume all functions and full service to citizens.

NIMS Template Available Online

The National Incident Management System (NIMS) Integration Center at the Federal Emergency Management Agency designed, developed, and posted online a basic NIMS Implementation Plan template for federal departments and agencies. The template's designers enthusiastically recommend it to states, local, and tribal organizations to guide their own NIMS implementation process.

The sample plan's concept of execution envisions four distinct phases of NIMS adoption. Phase 1 includes initial staff training. Phase 2 involves evaluating plans, policies, and procedures to identify aspects that need to be made compliant with NIMS concepts. Phase 3 includes the actual modification of emergency response plans and all other relevant plans, policies, and procedures to reflect the adoption of NIMS concepts. Phase 4 involves credentialing and certifying personnel and equipment based on NIMS Integration Center standards.

The NIMS Implementation Plan template can be seen and downloaded at:
http://www.fema.gov/doc/nims/nims_implementation_plan_template.doc

The Department of Homeland Security Information Analysis and Infrastructure Protection (IAIP) Directorate is the central point for notifications regarding infrastructure disruptions and intrusions. Members of the emergency response community are requested to report any incidents or attacks involving their infrastructures using one of the following points of contact:
1) IAIP - Voice: 202-282-9201, Fax: 703-607-4998, E-Mail: nicc@dhs.gov
2) Your local FBI office - Web: http://www.fbi.gov/contact/fo/fo.htm
3) EMR-ISAC - Voice: 301-447-1325, E-Mail: emr-isac@dhs.gov, fax: 301-447- 1034, Mail: Room J-247, 16825 South Seton Avenue, Emmitsburg, MD 21727